# MAAL
# IN TOUCH IN TUNE

Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL)

From the desk of the MAAL President

Greetings! Welcome to the new look second issue of our MAAL Newsletter In touch Intune. Congratulations to the newly formed MAAL MarComm committee led by Dr Ena and her team.

MAAL would like to take this opportunity to thank all our MAAL members for your membership and participation in MAAL.

The year 2020 has been a challenging one. Covid19 has changed the way we communicate and the way we do things. In short our lives has changed tremendously. As educators we have had to rethink the way we teach, redefine our teaching pedagogies and become online savvy for remote teaching almost overnight. It is our hope that MAAL members will come forward and share their experience and expertise in addressing these new challenges.

The MAAL executive committee has worked unstintingly to ensure that we maintain activities for our members and beyond. MAAL put together a series of webinars covering a range of topics - Webinar on Managing Transdisciplinary Research in Multilingualism Under The Challenges of The Pandemic; "Arabic Language and Professional Communication: Research Trends and Opportunities" Bahasa Melayu dalam Norma Baharu: Cabaran dan Harapan ( The Malay Language in the New Normal: Challenges and Hope), Supporting Linguistic Diversity in Malaysia through Research: A Sharing of Field Work Experience and "Re-thinking Applied Linguistics and Language Education in Multilingual ASEAN in Pandemic Times: The New Normal"

MAAL would like to take this opportunity to thank our collaborators, IIUM, University, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Sg Long Campus, University of Malaya Asia-Europe Institute who not only managed the webinars but also provided the technical support for the webinars.

We look forward to a busy 2021 engaging with our members through more webinars, workshops, conferences and talks.

I am certain that we will be able to come together to create a greater synergy of taking MAAL to greater heights with the launching of our new PILLARS of activities. We at MAAL wish you a Happy New Year 2021!

Thank you for all your support and trust in MAAL! God Bless and Stay Safe.

Prof Dr Shameem Rafik -Galea

## Highlights of content this month:

# EDITORIAL NOTE

*Dr. Ena Bhattacharyya*

Hello Everyone and Welcome to our first MAAL Gazette.

The MAAL Gazette is aimed at documenting the highlights, achievements, and stories of MAAL activities, updates, and exciting happening on research and academic endeavors in a structured and cohesive documented publication. Among the sections we wish to highlight include welcoming remarks by our beloved President Prof Dr Shameem Rafek-Galea, AILA Malaysia Chapter President Prof Azirah Hashim, Academic Scholar highlight of Dr. Vahid Nimechisalem and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shamala Paramasivam from University Putra Malaysia as well as En. Azlan Ahmad from Pusat Citra UKM and Dr. Mariah Ibrahim from Institute Perguruan Guru Kampus Bahasa Pulau Pinang. Their stories and experiences are truly inspiring in the field of language and linguistics. We have so much to learn from them.

Through this Gazette, we aim to forge greater solidarity among our members from all countries including members from Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. Simultaneously, through MAAL we hope to see and increase in membership affiliation and participation in AILA research clusters. This is only the beginning and we believe that each of you have a lot more exciting news to share. We look forward to receiving your contributions through this link:

*https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qXG3wEaCTvcKVgJAqhdmnXCiWg4jwY98.*

Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy our compilation of scholars and practitioners' happenings put up by our Editorial Team. Happy reading!

# FEATURED PERSONALITY

*Prof. Dr. Azirah Hashim*
*Vice President of AILA*

*1. Tell us about your background, when, where and how did you begin your career as an academic?*

I started my career as a lecturer at Universiti Malaya (UM) on returning from my undergraduate and Masters degrees in the UK more than thirty years ago with a BA in English from the University of Hertfordshire and an MA in TEFL and an MA in Linguistics from the University of East Anglia. At the time, the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics was the Language Centre at UM and the Director was Professor Asmah Haji Omar. A few years after joining UM, I started on a PhD and completed it in 1996. UM is the only organisation I have worked with in various roles and portfolios. It has been a most interesting, enjoyable and fulfilling journey, first at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics as a lecturer, associate professor, professor, Deputy Dean and Dean, and later as Dean of the Humanities Research Cluster, Director of the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism and Executive-Director of the Asia-Europe Institute. I had also, throughout that period, been Coordinator of the Asia-Africa Development University Network, Chairperson of the UM Research Ethics (non-medical) committee, Coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Higher Education Partnership network among others.

*2. What inspired you to be in this field?*

I was given a government scholarship to study English and Linguistics in the UK after my school studies. On my return, I started with mainly teaching English language at the then Language Centre of UM and, after the centre became a faculty, I was mostly involved in teaching various linguistics courses at the Masters and undergraduate level. I have had several research areas and interests over the years. I was initially involved in research on systemic functional linguistics and academic genres. I later became interested in language and law and was a member of an international project on the discourse of arbitration.

*(cont.)*

My role as country representative in the English in Southeast Asia Network led to a growing interest in English in Southeast Asia focussing initially on English in Malaysia and expanding to English in ASEAN - language policy, English as a lingua franca and language contact in Southeast Asia. As Director of the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism, I became very much involved in higher education developments in ASEAN and that led to research in this area as well. I am inspired by the interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics and its role in solving practical problems of language and communication.

Through discussions and with encouragement and support from applied linguists over a few years, in particular, the late Professor Christopher Candlin, Professor Vijay Bhatia, Professor Gerhard Leitner, Professor Low Ee Ling, Professor Richard Powell and Professor Daniel Perrin, I initiated the set up of the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics in 2013. I was appointed Vice-President of the International Associational of Applied Linguistics in 2017 and subsequently also set up the ASEAN regional network, AILA ASEAN. Through MAAL, AILA ASEAN and AILA, I hope we will see more research on applied linguistics that contributes towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and more collaboration among applied linguists in ASEAN and other regions.

## 3. *What is your most significant achievement in your area of expertise?*

I consider being awarded the Georg Forster Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (and am therefore a Humboldt Fellow), Germany in 2009/10 as one of my most significant achievements. It gave me an opportunity to take a break from administration ( I had been Dean and Deputy Dean of the faculty for more than 12 years), and focus on research in Germany and this has led to many more fulfilling research experiences. Apart from this, setting up the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism at UM in 2015 is another significant achievement and made me realise even more the importance of regional collaboration and working together with ASEAN partners in, for example, narrowing the development gap in ASEAN. My work with colleagues in Cambodia and Laos has been eye opening and enriching and so has the involvement in various ASEAN projects. Another achievement is setting up the Responsible Conduct for Research (non-medical)- research ethics system at UM and of course also, my professorial promotions. Finally, being appointed Vice-President of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) and therefore, President of AILA in 2021, is indeed a significant achievement in my career.

## 4. *What are your guiding principles in your journey as an academician?*

I believe in working hard and enjoying what I do. I think it is important to be proactive, accept challenges and be open to new ideas. I have constantly tried to expand my repertoire of skills and not just remain in my domain of expertise. Also, taking on a management position does not mean giving up research. As I have been in management positions for the last twenty-five years, I have had to marry the nexus between my administrative leadership and my academic publications. Cultivate and nurture work relationships and have a mentor or mentors and be a mentor to younger scholars. A good support system in terms of family and friends is important.

## 5. *What is your philosophy in life?*

Reach for the stars and keep your dreams alive.

## 6. What is your vision for the future?

I hope to see greater collaboration between applied linguists in the ASEAN region. In relation to this, AILA ASEAN can facilitate collaborations on language related regional and global issues. The network also aims to promote regional and inter-regional cooperation in pursuit of sustainable solutions. It can provide opportunities to young scholars to expand their horizons, to network with other applied linguists with similar interests and to get involved in regional and multinational projects, etc. Applied linguists must also be recognised as valuable research collaborators by other specialists who are working on research projects on tackling global challenges. In this way, more applied linguists will be included in these large inter/transdisciplinary projects.

## 7. What advice would you give to up and coming academics in this field?

There are many demands an academic faces. KPIs that are set can be daunting and the publish or perish phenomenon extremely stressful. The road to a successful career is definitely not easy. It requires a lot of hard work and sacrifices. But it can also be very fulfilling if you enjoy what you do and can see the benefits of your work. Do not be deterred by failure, success comes through trying and trying again. Often, an obstacle is the way forward. Commitment, resilience and perseverence will take you far. Seize opportunities when they arise, try to be agile at learning new knowledge and skills, be prepared to take the plunge from time to time and try to stay afloat rather than sink. For research collaboration that involves other/multiple countries, there is a need to bear in mind different mindsets, environment, social, political and cultural factors in different societies.

## 8. What do you do in your free time?

Travelling, hiking and reading.

## 9. What are your views with regards to online teaching and learning during this pandemic?

The pandemic has really accelerated the use of online platforms and posed several challenges for both academics and students. Teaching staff and policy makers have to put in place new measures to cope with this sudden development which go beyond giving technological support. Recent online teaching experiences have also shown how it disadvantages the poor and those with no proper access to laptops and internet; therefore, there must be alternative ways of allowing  more equal opportunities. Research on online teaching and learning is needed to find sustainable solutions to existing problems. This is where applied linguists have an important role. With webinars, however, the advantage is that online platforms have allowed access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in seminars and conferences. The downside of it is that networking is lacking and that there are no face-to-face encounters for deeper discussions on research and potential collaborations.

## 10. What are the prospects of applied linguistics in Malaysia?

Malaysia has a large number of applied linguists working on a good range of applied linguistics topics. MAAL as an affiliate of AILA can provide opportunities for Malaysian applied linguists to network with others with similar interests from different parts of the world, for example, through AILA special interest groups. Opportunities for applied linguists to do transdiciplinary research are increasing as specialists in other disciplines realise that applied linguists can play an important role in research programmes.

There are applied linguists currently working with medical specialists, with legal professionals, with economists, for example. Applied linguists working on the many different languages in Malaysia and in languages that are dying contribute towards the maintenance of language diversity, multilingual practices and documentation of languages. Through MAAL, AILA ASEAN and AILA, applied linguists can connect with other researchers and get involved in national, intraregional and international collaborations to help solve national, regional and global challenges.

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

*Dr. Vahid Nimechisalem*

### 1. What is your research interest?

As a researcher I've often been involved in developing and validating instruments. My research is mainly centered on self-assessment (SA) in academic writing and language assessment literacy. Our research teams have developed genre-specific SA guides to help students in writing argumentative essays, reporting their research results, and writing research proposals. Recently, we developed a Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) Index to help Malaysian Secondary School teachers self-evaluate their LAL levels. In addition to language assessment, because of the nature of my work environment, I have also been involved in projects related to language learning-teaching material evaluation, second languageacquisition, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and genre analysis.

### 2. What sparked your interest in this research area?

Most educators would find it difficult to be interested in assessment and I'm no exception. I was never interested in the area of assessment; neither as a students nor as a teacher. This changed, however, when I came to Malaysia in 2007 to complete my PhD in TESL. My supervisor suggested that I develop a scale for assessing argumentative writing. It wasn't easy at the beginning. All those books and studies on assessment with their statistical terminology and scary jargon were Greek to me. But, you don't know you're indeed interested in something until you come to know it. After taking several statistics courses and reading the related literature on assessment, I noticed my misconceptions about assessment. I owe my present position to the statistical skills that I reaped those years (and will of course never stop learning) and I advise my students to take the road not taken which will endow them skills that distinguish them and make them more employable.

### 3. What are the instrumental developments and significant highlights in your research?

I believe good research is simple in design but impactful in contributions. One interesting outcome that I believe is worth sharing with my fellow MALL members is this: We ask our teacher and student participants to write down the first five ideas that come to their minds when thinking of the word 'assessment'. The three most frequent repeating ideas that emerge all the time are 'tests', 'marks', and 'anxiety'. Some of the ideas that sadly have the lowest frequency are 'feedback', 'learning', and 'development'. These results are alarming in a modern society where assessment must be there for and as rather than of learning. This sounds like an insignificant problem, but I believe it is the root of a lot of evil in our educational system. Recently we collected some data from students, parents, and teachers in a highly prestigious international school in Kuala Lumpur about their views towards assessment. To our amazement, the themes that emerged from students and parents were:

a) Exams are difficult
b) Examiners are strict

c) *Exams provoke anxiety*
d) *Exams lack transparency*
e) Exams are excessive

It is unfortunate to observe such themes which will most likely trigger students' maladaptive behavior. However, more unfortunate is the fact that for these participants the term 'assessment' was always associated with 'exams' rather than 'learning', 'progress', and 'motivation'. The themes that emerged from our teacher participants were even more shocking:

a) We practice formative and summative assessment
b) Formative assessment does not count

One would not expect these themes to emerge from those teaching in a supposedly world-class international school, but understandably and most probably the school management and teachers must have localized and Asianized in the dominant Confucius and teacher-centered culture. In fact, they view formative assessment as a type of exercise that allows the students to develop; however, they do not take it as seriously as summative assessment.

I would like to end my answer to this question by also sharing the highlight of one of our self-assessment (SA) projects which indicated that students benefit from SA as significantly as they do from teacher corrective feedback. More interestingly, the students in our SA group could self-regulate significantly more successfully in setting their specific goals in comparison with the teacher feedback and control groups. If the readers are interested in this and similar research output, I encourage them to visit https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vahid_Nimehchisalem.

## 4. How does your research contribute to the community, society and nation?

When you Google 'research and…', the first search recommendation which pops up is 'research and development'. This is meaningful. It clearly shows what differentiates a Mercedes from a Proton is research. Research is the avenue for development.

As for our self-assessment (SA) research, students and teachers find the output of our projects useful. SA plays an important role in medical and health education, but our results show that language learners and teachers can equally find it effective. SA guides help teachers save a lot of time that they would otherwise have to spend on giving (often similar) comments to the same or different students. Learners also find SA helpful because they know what is exactly expected from them and how they can improve their performance.

Regarding our language assessment literacy (LAL) research, I remember once I was collecting data from a group of Secondary School teachers in Melaka. When the concept of individual assessment came up, one of the teachers kept claiming that she practiced individual assessment at school. As she argued, the very fact that she assigned individual marks to each student would mean that her assessment was individual. I gave her the example of this pediatrician who would examine ten patients together at the same time. Now, sadly this is the way most if not all teachers assess their students since they are not cognizant of the true definition of individual assessment. We should not ignore the fact that Malaysia has only recently started to transform from centralized tests to school-based assessment let alone classroom-based or even individual-based assessment. As you see research like this has to be done as it initiates meaningful interactions between researchers and practitioners. As a result, students and teachers will approach language assessment differently. *(cont.)*

The findings of such studies will help the education community and will equip policy makers with useful information based on which proper training can be provided for varying groups of stakeholders particularly in the scope of language learning-teaching-assessing. Apart from that, from a wider perspective, such studies can affect the whole society in all its layers by paving the way for the development of a democratic thinking nation. So, I'll repeat; research is the avenue for development.

*5. What further insights need to be discovered in this area of research?*

Much like many other people around me, I've also been a victim of unfair assessment, so my question has always been:

*6. How to transform from where and what we are to a community that views assessment as learning?*

My contention is that we can have a language education system in which assessment is an inseparable part. It may be but it is not necessarily always a test to be 'taken' or 'given'. I dream of a student-centered democratic society where students do not 'sit' for tests but 'stand', 'move around', and even 'play games' and 'sing songs' for assessment and self-assessment purposes.

I truly appreciate the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL) for providing this opportunity which I'd like to use for making a suggestion. I believe it is time we established the Malaysian Society of Language Assessment as a subset of MAAL. This society will be actively involved in developing the assessment literacy of its members that may consist of students, teachers, parents, principles, ministry officers, and other stakeholders by running workshops and conferences, publishing magazines and journals, among similar activities. Such establishments will give birth to meaningful research and in the meantime help Malaysians and any other nation that wishes to fight for, transform into, and maintain a democratic mindset.

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

*Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shamala Paramasivam*



### 1.What is your research interest?

Throughout my career as a researcher and educator at UPM, my interest in discourse studies and discourse analysis as a research method has not wavered, although the focus areas of research moved between educational and professional contexts. When I did the Master in TESL in 1998 at UKM, I researched on classroom discourse and interaction. Then, when I embarked on the PhD in Applied Linguistics in 2001, I left classroom discourse and moved into workplace discourse and interaction, working mainly on spoken business discourse. After I completed PhD in 2004, I continued research on workplace discourse, finding opportunities in written workplace genres such as letters emails and research articles, and other contexts of workplace communication such as the discourse of political speeches, sport commentary, aviation and air traffic control. Eventually after some time, I began research work that bridged classroom and workplace discourses and that brought me into the exciting area of English for Specific and Academic Purposes. Now, after a lifetime, I find myself coming full circle to classroom discourse and interaction, but with the added dimension of the online virtual classroom. My current research is in classroom discourse resulting from the use of computer- and mobile-based technologies in teaching and learning in higher education.

### 2. What sparked your interest in this research area?

The interest in discourse studies was as a result of my knack for qualitative research rather than quantitative research. I have a quality for observing people and analysing words; this quality, coupled with my dislike for statistics and numbers, orientated me towards qualitative research. And once I became comfortable with the methods in qualitative research and its various approaches, I made a career and life out of it.

*3. What are the instrumental developments and significant highlights in your research?*

When I look back at my research work over the years, whether it is in educational or professional contexts, I feel much of my research was on strategies: learning strategies, anxiety-coping strategies, communication strategies, discourse strategies, negotiation strategies, disagreement strategies, politeness strategies, strategies for power, persuasion strategies, rhetorical strategies, and even moves and steps in genre analysis can be viewed as sorts of strategies. I would say the highlights of my research work are in strategy use for learning and for communication in the academic and professional contexts.

*4. How does your research contribute to the community, society and nation?*

When I think of the significance of the work I have done, I feel the work is useful mainly for the community of educators and learners. Since much of my work is about strategy use, the value of the work is for teaching, learning and training, both in the context of education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in the context of the workplace for training people in professions. The community that would benefit from my research work the most would be teachers, educators and learners, especially those who are motivated to self-improvement in communication. In this way, by extension, my work contributes to society and nation building.

*5. What further insights need to be discovered in this area of research?*

The challenge in discourse studies and in applied linguistics research today is in making the research findings valuable and impactful to society. The utility of discourse studies, its applicability or practical value as solution to practical problems is a challenge for the future. In the past, linguists never needed to be too concerned with this issue. But this is now changing when we are often asked about the value and impact of our research. So, in my view the challenge for the future is in demonstrating how findings made from discourse-orientated research can impact on society; what is the wider impact of discourse studies beyond academia and how do we channel our findings to benefit society?

# ACADEMIC SPOTLIGHT

*En. Azlan Ahmad*
*Guru Bahasa Melayu Pusat Citra UKM*



## 1. Bagaimana tuan / puan memulakan pekerjaan dalam profesion ini?

Saya memulakan kerjaya sebagai guru bahasa Melayu DG41 pada tahun 2004, kira-kira 16 tahun yang lepas. Saya melapor diri di Pusat Pengajian Umum ketika itu (kini Nama Pusat Citra Universiti) Saya antara 3 calon yang berjaya dalam peperiksaan bertulis yang dihadiri kira-kira hampir 126 orang. Kemudian diikuti dengan temuduga secara lisan yang dihadiri oleh 22 orang. Cabaran itu sangat besar bagi saya kerana saya masih muda ketika itu dan tiada pengalaman. Pada awal pekerjaan, saya ditugaskan untuk mengajar pelajar Nusantara iaitu dari negara Indonesia (majoriti), Brunei Darussalam. Singapura dan Thailand bahagian selatan Selatan Thai) dan mengendalikan kursus sebagai ketua iaitu kursus ZZZM1053 Bahasa Melayu Untuk Keperluan Akademik 1 pada ketika itu (kini LMCM1053).

Pada masa yang sama juga, saya turut mengajar pelajar antarabangsa seperti dari negara Eropah, Timur Tengah, Asia Timur, Amerika Latin, Asia Tenggara dan lain-lain lagi. Pengalaman mengajar pada masa itu sangat menguja dan menakutkan kerana mengajar orang yang lebih dewasa daripada pengajar.

## 2. Apakah inovasi pendekatan pengajaran yang pernah tuan jalankan di dalam kelas?

Inovasi pendekatan pengajaran di kelas seperti menggunakan youtube, video, powerpoint dan juga aktiviti permainan. Mereka lebih seronok apabila pembelajaran kursus bahasa Melayu diselitkan dengan aktiviti yang bersifat santai dan sesuai dengan golongan dewasa.

## 3. Bagaimana pendekatan pengajaran dan pembelajaran tuan telah membantu pelajar dalam penggunaan bahasa mereka?

Biasanya sebelum memulakan kuliah atau memasuki tajuk pengajaran yang baharu, saya akan ulangkaji terlebih dahulu untuk melihat kefahaman pelajar tentang tajuk yang sudah dipelajari. Saya juga akan membuat soal jawab mudah tentang makna perkataan dalam bahasa Melayu seperti kata nama, kata kerja, kata adjektif, kata tanya dan kata sendi nama. *(cont.)*

Hal ini bertujuan untuk melihat penguasaan kosa kata pelajar dalam bahasa Melayu bertambah dari minggu sebelumnya dan pada masa yang sama pelajar lebih teruja untuk bersaing sesama rakan bagi menjawab makna perkataan yang ditanya.

Di samping itu, saya juga membuat kuiz mudah seperti latihan mengeja perkataan, menyebut perkataan dan sebagainya bagi tujuan memantapkan lagi penguasaan pelajar dalam bahasa Melayu mereka. Saya cuba untuk memastikan pelajar dapat menguasai asas bahasa Melayu dalam perbualan harian yang mudah dan ringkas.

## 4. Apakah cabaran yang pernah dihadapi dalam pengajaran di dalam kelas?

Setiap proses Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran di kelas pasti akan ada cabarannya kepada setiap pengajar. Cabaran itu berbeza-beza. Misalnya ada pelajar yang menganut fahaman sunni dan juga syiah berada dalam satu kelas. Mereka akan sentiasa mencari salah antara satu sama lain dan mereka tidak akan bekerjasama jika diletakkan dalam satu kumpulan. Untuk menyelesaikan masalah, pengajar terpaksa merombak kembali kumpulan dan membuat kumpulan baharu mengikut fahaman mereka. Sebagai pengajar, kita mesti memainkan peranan untuk meredakan keadaaan dan cuba memahamkan mereka akan tujuan mereka berada di Malaysia. Minta mereka untuk membuang sikap mementinkan diri dan cuba menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran di mana mereka berada sekarang.

Selain itu, terdapat masalah pelajar yang hanya boleh bercakap dalam bahasa Arab sahaja. Inilah cabaran yang juga hebat untuk ditangani. Pelajar tidak faham apa yang diajarkan oleh pengajar. Di sini, pengajar akan meletakkan pelajar tersebut dalam kumpulan pelajar yang pandai. Pelajar yang pandai itu akan menterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Arab apa yang diajarkan. Ia sebenarnya mengambil masa untuk pelajar tersebut untuk beradaptasi dengan kursus bahasa Melayu. Biasanya pada akhir semester, pelajar tersebut akan dapat menguasai juga walaupun hanya asas kosa kata dalam bahasa Melayu dan juga asas perbualan yang menjadi keperluan untuk pelajar menduduki peperiksaan akhir. Sekurang-kurangnya pelajar dapat menulis tentang dirinya dan keluarganya walaupun dalam penguasaan kosa kata yang terhad.

## 5. Apakah amalan Pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang dapat tuan cadangkan kepada guru-guru untuk peningkatan pembelajaran bahasa?

Pada zaman yang serba berteknologi tinggi ini, tenaga pengajar perlu mempersiapkan minda dan kreativiti untuk memastikan sesi PdP dapat dijalankan dengan lancar. Misalnya pada waktu pandemik Covid-19 ini, semua aktiviti dijalankan secara dalam talian termasuklah sesi pengajaran dan pembelajaran baik di peringkat sekolah mahupun di peringkat universiti. Mahu atau tidak, semua pihak perlu mengambil tahu tentang pengetahuan menggunakan pelbagai perisian dan aplikasi yang tedapat dalam internet yang mana sebahagian besar diguakan dalam proses PdP secara maya seperti Zoom Cloud Meeting, Microsoft Team, Webex, Google Meet dan pelbagai lagi. Untuk itu, bagi memastikan proses PdP secara maya dapat dijalankan dengan baik, adalah penting untuk pengajar mengetahui sedikit sebanyak cara penggunaan aplikasi atau perisian tersebut.

*(cont.)*

Sebagai pengajar kursus bahasa Melayu, pengetahuan semasa tentang disiplin ilmu ini juga perlu dikemaskini dari semasa ke semasa supaya setiap perubahan yang berlaku dapat diketahui oleh pengajar. Hal ini penting kerana pengajar akan berkongsi ilmu tersebut dengan pelajar dan pastinya perkongsian tersebut ialah perkongsian yang bermanfaat kepada pelajar.

Sikap mesra pelajar juga perlu ada setiap pengajar apatah lagi saya mengajar 2 golongan pelajar yang mempunyai peringkat umur yang berbeza iaitu pelajar pascasiswazah yang rata-rata berumur 30 tahun dan ke atas. Manakala bagi pelajar prasiswazah pula, mereka boleh dikategorikan peringkat umur remaja atau belia. Di sini peranan pengajar sangat penting dalam menarik minat pelajar mengikuti subjek atau perkongsian ilmu yang diberikan. Sikap tegas dan prihatin perlu ada pada setiap pengajar. Tegas munkin dari aspek masa, kehadiran ke kelas dan sikap semasa kuliah dijalankan. Prihatin pula ialah sikap pengajar yang sentiasa mengambil tahu tentang pelajar yang berada bawah penyeliaan kita selama kursus berlangsung seperti kebajikan mereka dan hak mereka.

# ACADEMIC SPOTLIGHT

*Dr. Mariah Ibrahim*
*Ketua Jabatan Bahasa*
*Institut Perguruan Guru Kampus Bahasa Pulau Pinang*

## 1. How did you begin your career in this profession?

Being the daughter of a teacher, I have always wanted to follow in my father's footsteps. As a young girl I spent a lot of time with my father who he would go back to his schools even outside normal teaching hours. I would just roam about the school compound observing the multiple activities going on in the semi-residential school.

When I won the scholarship to study and become a teacher, there was not an iota of doubt that this would be the path I would be taking for the rest of my life. Upon completion of my teaching degree I was placed in STAR, a boarding school is Ipoh. There I was met with a company of exemplary teachers who displayed very high sense of commitment and professionalism. The rest is history.

## 2. What innovative teaching approaches do you use in your classroom?

The two main ingredients for my approach in the classroom is "meaningful" and "engaging". I believe strategies are very important to provide excitement and variety in the classrooms. However, we need to look beyond that. I believe that in order to sustain interest in learning, teachers must think of ways to engage the students through meaningful learning to the students.

Oftentimes teachers get bogged down with the technical aspects of language such as the grammar and the mechanics. I prefer to imagine how my students would want to use the language that I teach them to benefit them personally, academically, socially or for more global purposes.

Before I prepare my lessons, I would always try to gauge my students'age and their probable interest. So whenever I need to teach a particular item or skill as stipulated in the syllabus, I will try to match those criteria. I often like to bring up-to-date and authentic materials for my classes as oppose to textbook material which I find lacking in many ways. And if I really have to use them, I would adapt.

I also value the knowledge that the students bring to class. I encourage them to speak and share their knowledge.

*(cont.)*

In my first year of teaching, I asked a form 2 student to take over a whole class taking his classmates through the process of extracting rubber from a rubber tree using the 'puncture method'. I knew that my student was the son of the MARDI officer. I had read about the puncture system. In the textbook, there was the chapter on process and procedures and the topic was how to tap a rubber tree.  I didn't think that would interest them, but listening to a classmate might. And I was right! It was good lesson conducted by a 14-year-old with the help of his father. That incident reaffirmed my belief that our students' knowledge matter.

Besides, I also like to bring songs and poems to add a flavor in the English classroom. Through carefully chosen songs and poem, we can create spaces for students to express themselves by responding to the lyrics and expressions of thoughts. This is always a meaningful process for young learners. Poems not only provide students with vocabulary, structures and literary devices, but they also expose the students to look at life from a different cultural window. Students need to be taught to be reflective and construct meaning for themselves.  Learning English should be both for functional as well as for aesthetic reasons.

### 3. How have your teaching and learning approaches assisted students in their language learning in the classroom?

I would like to think that the way I approach language learning provided students with a genuine interest in issues surrounding the world we live in today. I often get them to be aware of whats going on in the world. This often takes some time but I think it's a much needed  investment. Once the students are genuinly interested, then learning will happen naturally as the students are on their way to discover new knowledge for themselves. When I enter class and students are eager to share with me articles about a particular issue we had previously discussed then I know that success is on its way.

### 4. What are some of the challenges that you face in your classroom teaching?

I must say I have not been faced with many major obstackes in my teaching career. I taught in two of the best schools in Malaysia before going into teacher training. Having said that, the challenges that I felt most is when I feel there is a mismatch between what are in the official documents and what I think would be more valuable for my students to learn. This conflict often takes the form of examination. When I was teaching literature, for example, I always felt that my students would benefit more from the reader response approach but unfortunately, more often then not, the focus is on the technical aspects. Assessment must be constantly reassessed in line of the outcome of any language learning course. I try to overcome these challenges by balancing what students need to know to be successful in examination as well as for their own growth.

### 5. What are some of the effective teaching practices that you would suggest to teachers to enhance language learning?

It is very important to get students to engage with the materials as well as with each other. I am a staunch believer in task-based learning and cooperative learning. Activities based on these  principles provide practitioners with many opportunites to engage learners with meaningful activities and real communication. When the actitivies are designed surrounding  tasks, they can create an exciting environment for learning wihout merely focussing on language. I that this environment will eventually lead to a significant increase in motivation to learn the language.

# PUBLICATIONS

## BOOKS
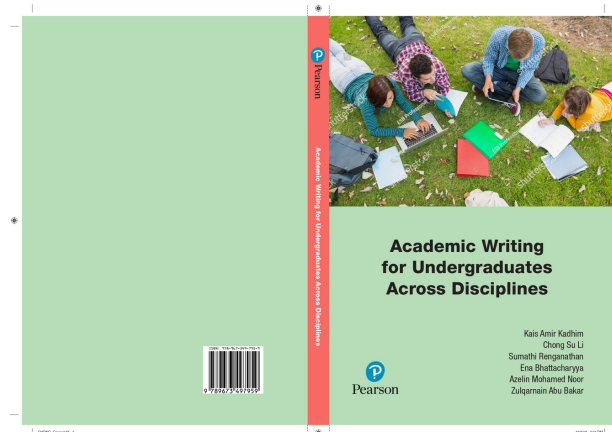


Academic Writing for Undergraduates Across Disciplines is written for undergraduate students who want to learn to write in an academic style. In the chapters, various examples of writing that are related to socialsciences, management, engineering and computer science are provided. The kinds of writing include reports, academic essays and even final year projects. Each chapter is divided into short sections, which contain examples, explanations and exercises, for use in the classroom or in self-study. Because the instructions in this textbook are user-friendly, students will need minimum guidance for the progression of their overall learning development.Overall, this book not only helps students to master the conventions of academic writing style but also to use appropriate language forms and functions in the writing. The authors are: Kais Amir Kadhim, Chong Su Li, Sumathi Renganathan, **Ena Bhattacharyya**, Azelin Mohamed Noor and Zulqarnain Abu Bakar. Published by Pearson Publishers in January 2019.



This book explores the meanings and uses of discourse markers in academic lectures through a discourse analytical approach. It demonstrates the 'patterning' of the ways discourse markers are used by English native speaker lecturers. It presents an analysis of the meanings and uses of two sets of discourse markers; the 'connective markers' (and, so and but) and the 'conversational interactive markers' (okay, right, well and now). The author highlights the significance of the functions of these discourse markers in contributing to the coherence of lectures that should help audience listeners to 'notice' the flow of informational content in academic lectures of native speaker lecturers.

**Zarina Othman**
Zarina Othman is a senior lecturer at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.Currently, she is the Deputy Director of Language Proficiency at The Centre for General Studies,UKM. Her research interests include Discourse Analysis, Academic Discourse, EAP and ESP.

Zarina Othman

**The Discourse of Academic Lectures**
The meanings and uses of discourse markers

**CLASSROOM INSIGHTS**
**LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS,**
**STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

*edited by*
Zarina Othman | Wahiza Wahi | Faridah Musa

**CLASSROOM INSIGHTS**
**LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS,**
**STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

Adopting a distinctive approach and strategy in teaching a language that is foreign to learners inspires them to want to learn the language. Knowing which capacities that learners are inadequate in will induce language practitioners to contemplate means to intervene to overcome learners' incapability. It is in their own classrooms that 'teacher action' is evident in implementing methods and strategies that are appropriate to the needs of their learners. These classroom insights are documented and serve as the essence of this book that should be meaningful for those in practice of LSP, ESP, TESL, TEFL and TOFL. *Classroom Insights, Language Learning Skills, Strategies and Practices* unravels teacher innovative in enhancing language learning skills, strategies and practices to ensure successful language learning.

ZARINA OTHMAN, PhD, is the Head of Latin American Programme at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) UKM. She has been also involved in several major research and academic collaborations and has published locally and internationally in the study of academic discourse, linguistics sexism, language teaching and language and communication. WAHIZA WAHI, PhD, is a senior lecturer at Citra UKM. She has published book chapters, journals and proceedings in the area of academic literacy, workplace literacy and English language learning at higher education. Her current research includes English language competencies and employability. FARIDAH MUSA is an English instructor at Citra UKM. She holds a Masters Degree in English Language Studies and has more than 20 years experience. Her areas of interests are communication strategies, critical thinking, and material development.

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## BOOK CHAPTER

**CONNECTING OCEANS**
Malaysia as a Nusantara Civilisation

Edited by
HANS-DIETER EVERS
ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG
RASHILA RAMLI
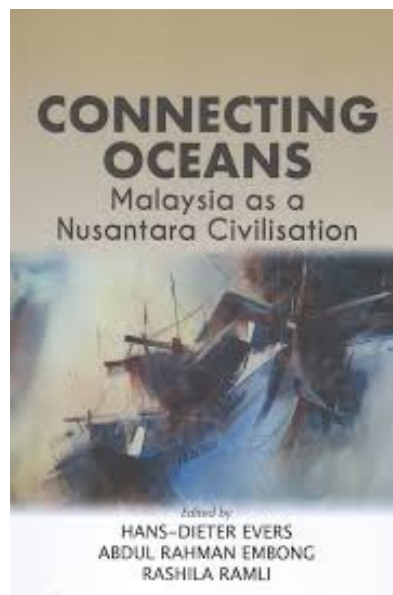
*Zarina Othman*
*A Maritime*
*World of Words: A linguistic Analysis of Malay Glossaries*

Malay was once the lingua franca for the Malay Archipelago region i.e. the Nusantara sphere and beyond. It had evidently been used widely by traders and seamen as the language of trade and commerce. This paper illustrates the richness of the Malay language in its nautical, maritime words throughout the pre-modern time era which had indirectly lead to the positioning of Malaysia as a maritime nation. A linguistics analysis of the Malay glossaries in Shellabear English Malay Dictionary (1916) and the Malacca Maritime Code becomes the focus of this chapter in presenting the evidence of Malay contributing to the Maritime World of Words.

Assoc. Prof. Dr Cordelia Mason et al
How Do Malaysian Universities Introduce Themselves? A Discourse Analysis of The Introduction Section of Public Universities e-portals
in
B, Abdul Hamid, Lee, SC., & AH, Shaari (Eds). Discourse in Practice – From Conventional to Digital, PP87-116. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi. ISBN 978-967-412-653-7.

As part of the bigger electronic government (e-government) initiative introduced in Malaysia in 2004, the adoption of e-portals among all sectors of the government including public universities has been growing rapidly due to the ubiquity of the Internet and mobile services. As technology advances, users can perform real-time interactions with other users within their virtual communities. Active user behaviours such as the searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making online value and other members within their virtual communities, which lead to online purchases. How do public universities in Malaysia position themselves to enhance perceived values among its stakeholders : the students, alumni, the academic fraternity, parents, employers, funders, staff and the public at large? How do they introduce themselves to the public through their e-portals? This chapter presents the discourse analysis of the introduction section of 20 public universities in Malaysia. The analysis focuses on the elements contained in the introduction section on the e-portals of the universities.

# MAAL MEMBER RESEARCH PROJECT

**1.LINGUISTICS SEXISM AND GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING IN QATARI ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING (2009 – 2012)**

Qatar National Research Foundation (QNRF) 2012 – UKM

Researchers: Prof. Madya Dr. Bahiyah Binti Dato` Haji Abdul Hamid (PI);Dr. Mohamad Subakir Mohd Yasin;Prof. Madya Dr. Yuen Chee Keong;**Prof. Madya Dr. Zarina Binti Othman (MAAL Member)**;Dr. Azhar Bin Jaludin

This corpus-based study is part of a bigger study that investigated the occurrence of gender stereotyping and linguistic sexism in the corpus of Qatari primary school science textbooks (Grades 1 to 6). The research design of this study paired the Corpus Linguistics Approach with Critical Discourse Analysis, which is an innovative endeavour in textbook analysis not much capitalised by researchers in the area. The findings revealed the existence of a large number of neutral gender role which seem to indicate that the textbook writers were making a conscious effort to promote gender equality.

Email: zothman@ukm.edu.my

**2. DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION ETHICS FRAMEWORK IN DOCTOR PATIENT DISCOURSE TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL PRACTICE (2016 -2019)**

Geran Universiti Penyelidikan (GUP) GUP-2016-066 - UKM

Researchers: **Prof. Madya Dr. Zarina Binti Othman (PI) (MAAL Member)**;Prof. Dr. Zaleha Binti Abdullah Mahdy;Prof. Datuk Dr. Harlina Halizah Bt. Siraj @ Ramli;Prof. Dato' Dr. Raymond Azman Bin Ali;Puan Wan Nur`Ashiqin Binti Wan Mohamad;Dr. Halizah Bt. Omar;Dr. Mohd. Azman Bin Abas;Puan Azizah Binti Ya`Acob;Puan Rozmel Binti Abdul Latiff

This project identifies the problems of communication ethics in the discourse of doctors & patients towards professional medical practice. It explores the clarity of information and the language use in doctor-patient interaction in hospital clinics. The project has developed a communication framework that can be used as a reference in providing good quality healthcare in the doctor-patient clinic interaction. This data generated essential communication components that contribute to the development of doctor-patient communication framework. This framework is potentially significant in raising awareness among practising physicians. It also potentially provides a basis to design modules in the medical training at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Email: zothman@ukm.edu.my

## 3. HEAR ME! EMPOWERING DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

Translational Malaysia Research University Network (MRUN) (2019-2021)

Researchers: Dr Thilagavathi Shunmuganathan (PI); **Dr Ang Pei Soo (MAAL Member)**;Dr Teoh Mei Lin; Dr Sharala Subramanian Universiti Malaya Taylor's University

This is a community engagement cum action research project to empower disabled youth in employment-related communication. The project evaluates the needs of 29 students who are attending the art programme at Pusat Latihan dan Perindustrian OKU Bangi. We develop their communication skills to speak about themselves as well as their needs and rights as disabled persons through visual narratives. Subsequently, they are coached to promote their distinctive art skills and art pieces, and handle job interviews. Apart from developing a replicable training module for language trainers and volunteers who have no training in special education, we also organize large scale art exhibitions and profile each artist on social media as sustainable platforms for promoting their work and giving them visibility. The project enables this community to propel their advancement by providing them the linguistic skills and sustainable avenues to be known and recognized for and on their own accord as unique citizens, equally capable of contributing towards nation building. This is in line with Goal 10 of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SGD) 2030 and the Malaysian Action Plan for People with Disabilities 2016-2022.

Email:angps@um.edu.my

## 4. INTER-RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE IN MALAYSIA: CONSTRUCTION OF MALAYSIA NATIONAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY MODEL

Trans Disciplinary Research Grant Scheme (TRGS) 2016-2019

Researchers: **Prof Dr Munif Zarirruddin Fikri bin Nordin (PI), Universiti Utara Malaysia (MAAL Member)**; Assoc. Prof Dr Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Member)

In Malaysia, the level of religious tolerance is high over last three decades. This situation has contributed to this multi-religious country in creating a peaceful atmosphere. However, inter-religious discourse among different religious adherents is not always easy to handle. For instance, the issue of the use of the word 'Allah' by some Christian groups in Malaysia is a result of lack of discourse among them and Muslim groups. Thus, inter-religious discourse in Malaysia need to be dealt systematically and effectively by taking into consideration Malaysia's cultural and national identity.

This study aims to identify the lexical characteristics in inter-religious discourse; analyse the background and the context of discourse's production, and analyse the value with regards to similarity and differences underlying the discourse. This study is primarily a textual analysis. The selected texts are spoken or written messages highlighted by religious leaders representing four important religions in Malaysia, namely Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism on the inter-religious issues. The texts are documented during the past five years (2010-2015). These documented texts will be analyzed using Crystal's model pertaining to the factors, barriers and impact of the use of language in a community. The model can be applied to manage the similarities and differences in tackling inter-religious issues, and in analyzing the lexical, discourse production and discourse impacts in the studied texts. This output will be in the form of a mechanism that will provide guidelines on how to manage issues on the similarities and differences between religions in Malaysia. Due to the devastating impact of inter-religious issues which are very difficult to predict and restore, there is a dire need to establish a mechanism that can enhance mutual understanding and high degree of tolerance by sharing cultural values and national identity towards creating a peaceful and prosperous society.

Email: munif@uum.edu.my

## 5. MAPPED ICGPA-INDUSTRY 4.0 FRAMEWORK IN EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND WORK READINESS FOR FUTURE ENGINEERING GRADUATES

Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) 2018

Researchers: **Dr Ena Bhattacharyya (PI) (Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS,(UTP) (MAAL Member)**; Prof Dr Balakrishnan a/l Parasuraman (UMK); Dr Savita Sugathan (UTP); Dr Hairuzila Idrus (UTP); AP Dr Noor Amila (UTP)

Despite Malaysian Education Blueprint efforts in human capital and manpower skills training reforms, Malaysian employability rate among graduates persists at an alarming. Educational ICGPA efforts and transformational plans through Vision 2020 and 11MP have yet to address the lack of employability and work readiness concerns among the engineering graduates who contribute to the 60:40 ratio toward a STEM-driven economy. The aim of this study is to provide society foresight in aligning ICGPA with industry employability skills and work readiness to ensure that labour market needs are asymmetry to industry skill needs to meet nation building efforts. The aspects probed are Employability Skills and Work Readiness Attributes in Integrated Cumulative Grade Point Average (ICGPA) of Engineering Programs in Institutions of Higher Learning; Employability Skills and Work Readiness Framework for Engineers in Industry 4.0. The study aims to develop an Engineering Graduate Framework in Employability Skills Training and Work Readiness Performance Indicator.

 Email: ena_bhattacharyya@utp.edu.my

## 6. EXPLORING PERSONAL BLOGS BY BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS: TOWARDS ICT TRANSFORMATION (2016-2020) FOR INNOVATIVE HEALTH PROMOTION

Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) 2019

Researchers: **Dr Wan Nur Asyura Wan Adnan (UTM) (MAAL Member)**; Dr Rohani Othman; Dr Noor Aireen Ibrahim; Assoc Prof Dr Hanita Hassan

This study is a discourse analytical study on Malaysian breast cancer survivor blogs. The motivation to embark on this study is due to our concern on the facts that 40 percent of breast cancer cases in Malaysia is detected at advanced stages (stage III and IV) mainly due to lack of awareness among Malaysian women. Hence, we feel that information seeking behaviour of Malaysian women with regard to breast cancer needs to be examined. Especially with the advent of the internet, people's health information seeking behaviour has changed dramatically. Million people across the world have utilised the internet to seek health-related information with personal blogs becoming a popular source of health information. These individuals who have experienced and survived the illness can be considered as lay experts of the disease. Therefore, this study aims to explore personal breast cancer blogs as a powerful source of information and advice in raising awareness and understanding of breast cancer. The study will provide an overview of Malaysian women's pattern of information seeking regarding breast cancer. The expected findings of this study will provide useful fundamental knowledge of breast cancer related information seeking and sharing behaviour among Malaysian women and; understanding of the nature of personal blogs as an innovative health promotion tool to raise breast cancer awareness among Malaysians.

Email address: asyura.kl@utm.my

## 7. A NEW MODEL TO PROMOTE HALAL CONCEPT THROUGH MULTI-PERSPECTIVE APPROACHES FOR THE HALAL FOOD INDUSTRY

Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) 2018

Researchers: **Dr Adlina Ariffin (IIUM) (MAAL Member)**; Prof Azura Amid (IIUM);Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Ridwan Abd Wahid (UM); Dr Haniza Khalid (UNDP);Dr Noor Saazai Mat Saad (USIM);International Islamic University Malaysia

The global halal food industry valued at USD 660 billion is a booming industry (Global Islamic Financial Report 2017; Malay Mail, 5 April 2017). With such economic potential, the Malaysian government has formulated strategic approaches to become a global halal hub by 2020. In achieving this agenda, strong emphasis must be placed on the promotion of the halal food products especially in the choice of linguistic terms or phrases in marketing them to the global communities. For instance, are terms such as 'non-alcoholic', 'Muslim friendly products', 'pork-free' and 'Muslim food' sufficient and suitable to convey the socio-religious notions encapsulated in the 'halal' framework? Are the terms able to gain customers' trust and attract them to purchase the halal food? One of the best approaches to educate the masses on the halal concept is through promotional means (Rahimah, 2014). Hence, is the promotional discourse in halal food able to create halal awareness among the masses? Despite numerous studies on halal food products, there is a dearth of research which analyses the promotional language used to convey the halal message and its effectiveness in gaining customers' trust, creating halal awareness among them which leads to their purchase of the products. Using a multi-perspective discourse analysis, the study aims to investigate the concept of 'halal' from the psycholinguistics and socio-religious perspectives. It shall situate the textual analysis of promotional discourse of halal food products in the social dimension to capture the 'thoughts' and 'voices' of the stakeholders (i.e. producers, manufacturers) of halal food. It shall gain insights into the 'thinking' employed in the conceptualization of the projected halal image and the effectiveness of this approach on local and foreign consumers. The findings of the study will provide valuable information to agencies in the Malaysian halal food industry to strategise the halal food promotion.

Email: adlina@iium.edu.my

**8. HORIZON 2020 (MSCA-ITN-2017) MARIE SKLODOWSKA-CURIE INNOVATIVE TRAINING NETWORKS.THE MULTILINGUAL MIND (MULTIMIND).**

Researchers: Theodoros Marinis (PI- UoR, UK),  Maria Teresa Guasti (UNIMIB, IT), Tanya Rinker (UKON, DE), Albert Costa (UPF, ES),  Niels Schillier (UL,NL), Zofia Wodniecka (JU, PL), Julie Frank (UNIGE, CH), Despoina Papadopoulou (AuTh, EL), **Ngee-Thai Yap (UPM, MY) (MAAL Member)**, Maria Luisa Lorusso (MEDEA, IT), Giuseppina Sorce (CPIA1, IT). Universiti Putra Malaysia

The Multilingual Mind (MultiMind) is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska Curie grant agreement No 765556. MultiMind is an international multidisciplinary and multisectorial training network on multilingualism and it supports fifteen early-stage researchers working on fundamental research at various institutions. The Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication in collaboration with the Centre of Nuclear Diagnostic and Imaging at UPM and the Centre for Integrative Neuroscience and Neurodynamics at University of Reading, UK is a member of this project. More information about the project and the training network can be found at https://www.multilingualmind.eu

Email: ntyap@upm.edu.my

**9. EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF AN INTERCULTURAL READING PROGRAMME (IRP) IN DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL FRAMEWORK AMONG MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Fundamental Research Grant (FRGS) 2014

Researchers: **Assoc Prof Dr Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh, (MAAL Member)**;Assoc Prof Dr Premalatha Karupiah; Dr Paramaswari Jaganathan; En Ahmad Sofwan Nathan bin Abdullah Universiti Sains Malaysia

The main objective of this study is to design an intercultural framework to increase the level of intercultural understanding among secondary school students via Intercultural Reading Programme (IRP).  A total of 400 secondary school students facilitated by 40 teachers from Penang participated in the study.  This mixed method research comprises pre and post survey questionnaire, journal writing by the students and focus group interviews with the teachers. Quantitative data analysis involved inferential and descriptive statistics.  Qualitative data was analysed with the use of NVivo10 software.   This study helped to incorporate the process of intercultural competence within meaningful learning activities and provide a guide to inculcate the intercultural framework in reading programmes for secondary school students. The findings contributed new knowledge to be incorporated in the latest Malaysian Education Blueprint and The National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) to enhance the learning of intercultural values, ideologies and cultures that can benefit the communities and country.

Email: manjeet@usm.my

## 10. A STUDY OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MALAYSIAN JAPANESE SPEAKING EMPLOYEES AND JAPANESE EXPATRIATES EMPLOYERS

The Sumitomo Foundation, Japan (2019)

Researchers: **Dr Yeoh Lee Su; Assoc Prof Dr Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh (MAAL Member)**
Universiti Sains Malaysia

Lack of proficiency in Japanese language is a hindrance for successful intercultural communication between Malaysian Japanese speaking employees (MJSE) and Japanese employers (JE) in Japanese companies (JC) in Malaysia. Therefore, this mixed method study involving MJSE and JE investigated the Japanese language requirements of JC and MJSE language use in intercultural context to identify Japanese language challenges faced by MJSE in JC. The findings indicate major challenges in listening and speaking compared to reading and writing. This indicate lack of language preparedness of Malaysian Japanese language learners before embarking for employment into JC in Malaysia. The study recommends evaluation of the Japanese language curriculum to ensure MJSE's readiness to embark into employment at JC.

Email: manjet@usm.my

# BITS & BYTE

*2020 In Retrospect*

The English in Southeast Asia (ESEA) Conference series began in 1996 as a collaboration between NIE, NTU (Singapore), Universiti Malaya and UBD. Since then, the group of collaborating institutions has expanded to become truly representative of Southeast Asia:

- National Institute of Education (Singapore)
- University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
- Universiti Brunei Darussalam
- Curtin University (Perth, Australia)
- Ateneo de Manila University (Quezon City, the Philippines)
- Hong Kong Baptist University
- Sanata Dharma University (Yogyakarta, Indonesia)
- King Mongkut's University of Technology (Thonburi, Thailand)
- Waikato University (New Zealand)
- University of Macao (Macao)
- Hangzhou Normal University (Hangzhou, China)

# MAAL WEBINAR SERIES 2020



COVID-19 has brought to the fore a lack of information on the disease and on public health in general for many people. Clear, accurate and accessible information about the disease and public health response to it is essential. Information must be presented in a language that is easily understood via a medium and in a format that can be trusted. The availability of accurate information is crucial not only for the public but also for health professionals and decision makers. However, much of the information available to date has been presented in English and in the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, while lesser-used languages have been neglected. At the same time, social media has swamped the public with misleading information creating widespread confusion. With regard to vocabulary, there has been an exponential rise in the use of a single word in a short time: Covid-19, or coronavirus, and of war-related analogies. New vocabulary encompassing specialist medical terms, new acronyms, and words and phrases to express the imperatives of isolation and distancing have become dominant. This phenonenon has implications for applied linguistics research. This panel addresses challenges of transdisciplinary research and multilingualism, drawing lessons from the experience of COVID-19 thus far. The importance of pragmatic approaches and interactions among academics and practitioners in supporting multilingualism as an effective response to global challenges will be highlighted.

Malaysia is a multicultural and multilingual country with more than forty living ethnic groups in total both on the western peninsula and the states on the Borneo island. While the largest ethnic groups have often been identified as the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans and Kadazans, a large number of minority groups exist with their distinct languages, some of which have been indicated as endangered due a dwindling number of speakers. Many of these minority languages have not been committed to the written form, and hence, the rich cultural knowledge associated with the speech communities are accessible only through the oral tradition. The diverse sociolinguistic character of Malaysian society offers a fertile ground for linguistic and applied linguistics research that can contribute to both development of linguistic theory and understanding of cultural and sociolinguistic practices of particular societies. In this webinar, we invite three active researchers who have made invaluable contributions towards supporting linguistic diversity in Malaysia through research on Malaysian languages. Dr Jurgen Bukhardt, Assoc. Prof. Dr Su-Hie Ting and Prof. Stefanie Pillai, who are noted for their work on ethnic languages and dialects will share their findings on some of their research conducted, and their experience in conducting field work, particularly for researchers interested to venture into this area of research.

Webinar ini akan memfokuskan kepada perbincangan cabaran dan harapan tentang isu bahasa Melayu dalam norma baharu. Perbincangan pada topik ini bertujuan untuk mengupas perkembangan dan kedudukan bahasa Melayu pada konteks terkini. Perkembangan dan pencapaian dunia global ini menjadi ancaman besar kepada generasi hari ini yang memperlihatkan bahasa Melayu masih tidak cukup mantap kerana bahasa Melayu itu tidak kolerasi dengan taraf sosial dan nilai ekonomi yang tinggi. Apakah padangan dan peranan ahli bahasa pada hari ini dapat memberi kefahaman dan menekankan kedudukan bahasa Melayu pada generasi muda hari ini yang melihat bahasa Melayu semakin dilacurkan khususnya dalam perkembangan kemodenanan pada hari ini. Selain itu, apakah harapan atau pandangan yang boleh dilakukan bagi menjaga dan mengekalkan kedudukan bahasa Melayu pada abad ini.



A *Specialized Audience Webinar* brought to you by MAAL, *in collaboration with* Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, IIUM and KLM Postgraduate Student Society.

# MAAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES: PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

*Professor Dr. Stefanie Pillai (University of Malaya) - Sounding Portuguese in Malaysia*

*Associate Prof. Dr. Cordelia Mason (UniKL) - Inner Voice and Crisis Leadership*

# 4TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
# 21 DEC 2019
## VENUE: ASIA-EUROPE INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

# 5TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
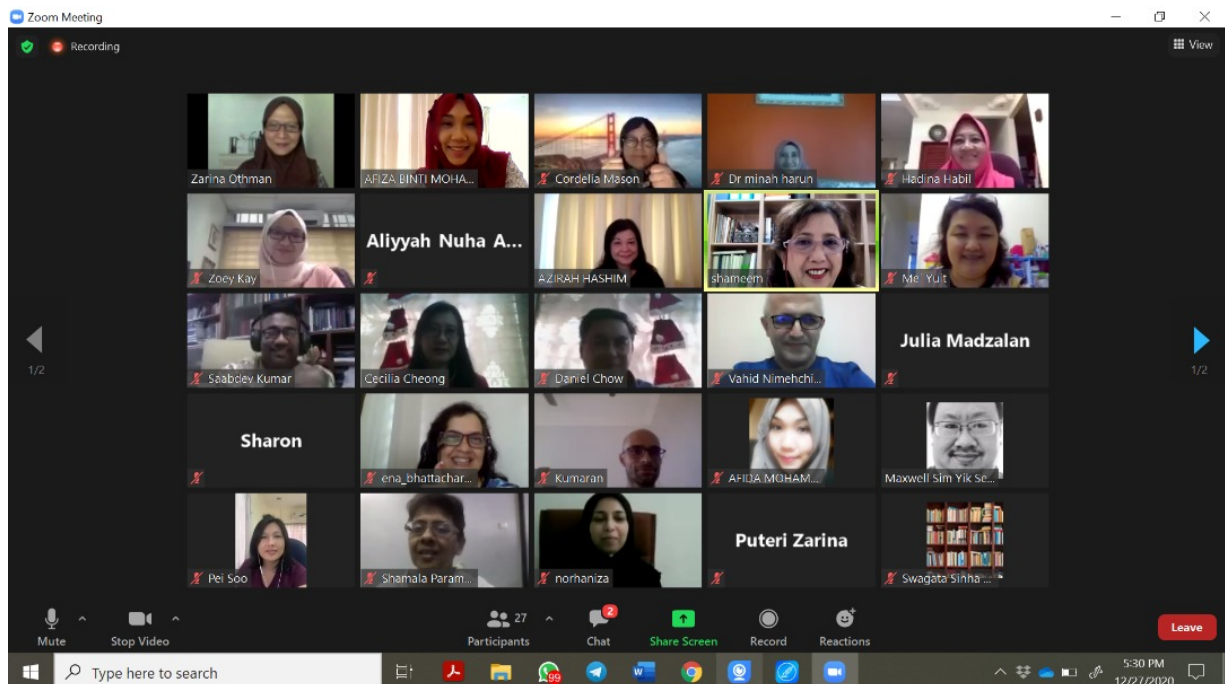# 27 DEC 2020
## VENUE: ZOOM LIVE MEETING

# FINAL NOTE

Customarily, as we look back at the end of the year 2020, we reflect on our successful journey as the national linguistics association of Malaysia despite its doozy challenges. Hope you enjoyed our very first gazette. Please do keep updating us on your related linguistics endeavors so that we can share them with others too. Wishing you a very happy new year 2021. Looking forward to the other celebrations, Thaipusam and Chinese New Year. May 2021 will be a more meaningful year for everyone.

Stay safe.